

March, 2017



# *British Home Child Group International*

**Canada apologizes to British Home Children** by Sandra Joyce

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney



Left to Right - Jenny Kwan, NDP, Elizabeth May, Green, Luc Theriault, BQ, Sandra Joyce, BHCIGI, Judy Sgro, Liberal, Karen Mahoney, BHCIGI

On Thursday February 16, 2017, the House of Commons adopted a motion to apologize for the experience of the British Home Children.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): "Mr. Speaker, I ask for the consent of the House to adopt the following motion, with the support of the MP from Humber River--Black Creek [Judy Sgro], the MP from Chilliwack--Hope [Mark Strahl], the MP for Vancouver East [Jenny Kwan] and the MP from Saanich--Gulf Islands [Elizabeth May]:

"That the House recognize the injustice, abuse and suffering endured by the British Home Children as well as the efforts, participation and contribution of these children and their descendants within our communities; and offer its sincere apology to the former British Home Children who are still living and to the descendants of these 100,000 individuals who were shipped from Great Britain to Canada between 1869 and 1948, and torn from their families to serve mainly as cheap labour once they arrived in Canada."

The motion was unanimously agreed to by all the Members of Parliament present in the House of Commons and adopted.

After collecting thousands of signatures on petitions both written and electronic, calling and emailing most MPs in both official languages and MP Judy Sgro tabling our Petitions four times in the House of Commons, a dream had come true. We finally had it!

However, without the former leader of the Bloc Québécois, Gilles Duceppe, the motion would never have been made nor adopted. Mr. Duceppe's interest in the Apology was rekindled last year when he did a CTV interview with BHCIGI's Sandra Joyce. Joyce was in Montreal to do a presentation at the Atwater Library. After the interview, BHCIGI's Karen Mahoney, Joyce and Carolyn Perkes spoke in length with the Duceppe family about their maternal BHC grandfather and the need for an Apology. Mahoney presented the Duceppes with a carefully researched genealogy dossier. The Duceppes signed the petition started by Joyce and the BHCIGI and watched the BHCIGI's BHC film called '[Lost and Found](#)'.

Mr. Duceppe's maternal grandfather was John James Rowley, born in one of the poorest parts of London to Irish Catholic parents. He was sent to Canada by the Catholic Church and placed in Quebec on a farm where they spoke little English. Duceppe says that his grandfather was not mistreated but experienced extreme loneliness.

*Continued on page 2...*

## Canada apologizes to British Home Children *continued*

In 2009, Mr. Duceppe had supported a motion to make 2010 the Year of the British Home Child. He spoke at length to the motion and his closing words were: "We will support this motion. We thank the member for moving it, but more must be done. The government must accept its responsibilities immediately and not only honour the memory of British home children, but also apologize. It is the right thing to do."

With the opening of the play, *Ne M'Oublie Pas – Forget Me Not* – at Theatre Duceppe in Montreal, Duceppe felt the timing was right. It took many calls, changes in the wording of the Apology, especially the phrase from 'The Government of Canada' to 'The House of Commons'. Mr. Duceppe asked for Joyce and Mahoney's trip be rerouted to Ottawa from Montreal in case the motion passed and asked Joyce to be the spokesperson at the media scrum should the need arise. The motion could not be delayed if the parties were in agreement. Any delay might make the motion fail.

There was then a congratulatory post-play dinner with the Duceppe family in Montreal, after the very emotional viewing of *Ne M'Oublie Pas* and the cast and the Apology was toasted. The Duceppes are looking into providing surtitles in English.

"I am very happy that all the parties have joined together today to apologize, as did Australia and the United Kingdom, to the British Home Children." - Gilles Duceppe

"This is truly an exciting moment for the British Home Children still with us and their descendants. It will give the over 100,000 children sent here to work as indentured farm labourers and domestics national recognition. Their stories, largely unknown until now because of the stigma they faced in Canada, are part of the diverse tapestry that makes up our great nation. As the daughter of a British Home Child, and a co-founder of the British Home Child Group International, I hope that this acknowledgment will lead to more reunions of families torn apart by this child migrant scheme." - Sandra Joyce



From Left around the table: Carolyn Perkes, BHCIGI, Mrs. Yolande Brunelle (Gilles Duceppe's wife), Ms. Louise Duceppe, Sandra Joyce, BHCIGI, Gilles Duceppe, Karen Mahoney, BHCIGI



## Wallace Ford by Sandra Joyce



Many thanks to Martine King, who is the Archives and Records Manager at Barnardos' Head Office in the UK, for copies of *'Barnardo Voices'* sent to our President Karen Mahoney and co-founder and Vice-President Sandra Joyce. It includes a story about British Home Child Wallace Ford - a well-known Broadway actor.

Wallace Ford's impressive career is even more awe-inspiring when considering the dreadful start to his life. Separated from his parents at a young age, Samuel Jones (his real name) was placed in Barnardo's at age three.

In 1905, at the age of seven, Samuel was sent to Canada to the organization's location in Toronto along with a group of 163 other children. Samuel was placed in 17 different homes before he ran away at the age of eleven after the last farmer he was with mistreated him. He then joined a Canadian Vaudeville Group, known as the Winnipeg Kiddies. He performed with this group for three years before leaving with a friend to ride the rails in the United States.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck and his friend was crushed to death in a railway car. At this point, Samuel Jones took his friend's name and became Wallace Ford. Under this name, he found work in theatrical troupes, repertoires and vaudeville.

During this time, he began his 21-year-long search for his biological mother, something that was unheard of at the time. The only information that he had was her name: Catherine Jones. By 1920, he started to work on Broadway and soon after he married his life-long bride, Martha Harworth. They had one daughter together: Patricia.

Wallace Ford got his Hollywood debut in 1932, signing a contract with MGM. He appeared in over 200 films alongside Joan Crawford, Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, James Stewart, Richard Widmark and Henry Fonda to name a few.

It was during the 1930s that Wallace found his mother through his film connections. Los Angeles police contacted Scotland Yard who narrowed the search to Lancashire. His aunt, Mrs. Mary Beddoes who originally placed him in Barnardo's, came forward and identified his mother, Catherine Jones, known locally as "Mam Kit". She was living with her husband, a match seller, known as Blind Dan in a trailer beside a river in Cheshire, England. Wallace visited her, his actions garnering world-wide attention, and bought his mother and her husband a little house. "She has had a hard life," he said.

Wallace Ford played a number of character roles throughout his career, acting in 'B' horror films before graduating to Westerns. He had roles in five of John Ford's films and also was in Alfred Hitchcock's film, *Shadow of a Doubt*. Wallace also appeared alongside Henry Fonda in a TV series, *The Deputy* and on the *Andy Griffith Show*, as well. Wallace's last appearance as Old Pa was with Sidney Poitier in the highly successful *A Patch of Blue* before his heart gave out in 1966, shortly after his wife Martha passed away.





Another very interesting quilt with a unique story will be at our display in the Newmarket Old Town Hall, starting at noon on April 1, 2017.

On one side is the Union Jack. It was obtained at the end of the First World War during Armistice celebrations in London by Canadian Private George Henry Collins who climbed up a fire escape to get it. He brought the souvenir back to the grandmother, Josephine McGahey, of Belleville resident Ron Allred. Josephine made it into a quilt. The backing is a pattern of printed military cloth dolls representing different Canadian regiments. They were usually cut out, stuffed with rags and sold for 10 cents. The money was collected for the Red Cross.



Photo courtesy Ron Allred

The McGaheys took ten-year-old George in at the request of Barnardo's in Lindsay. George was being neglected by the farmer he was placed with. The warm relationship George enjoyed with the McGaheys is shown by the frequent letters he wrote to them during the time he was stationed overseas. Allred's mother often remarked to him about how George was like a brother to her.

### *British Home Children Exhibit April 1st to April 15th*



*Old Town Hall, Newmarket, Ontario*

## Upcoming Events

### **Beach and East Toronto Historical Society**

March 21st 7:00pm - 8:15 pmg

Toronto Public Library - Beaches Branch

### **Lambton County OGS & Sarnia Historical Society**

April 11th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Sarnia, ON

### **Lindsay Little Theatre**

April 21st - April 29th

After panel discussion

### **Belleville Probus Club**

April 27th 10:00am - 12:00pm

Pentecostal Church, Belleville, ON

### **Unveiling of BHC Quilt, Presentation & Q&A**

April 1st - 12:00 pm

Old Town Hall, Newmarket, ON

### **York Region OGS**

April 12th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Richmond Hill Library

Richmond Hill, ON

### **Riverdale Historical Society**

April 25th 7:00pm - 9:00pm

St. Matthew's Club Riverdale East

Toronto, ON

## Unveiling of BHC GI's Quilt and Extensive Two Week Exhibit

To celebrate Canada's 150th Birthday, we are pleased to announce an extensive two week exhibit of British Home Child artifacts at the newly renovated Newmarket Old Town Hall. The exhibit will be opened on April 1st at noon with a presentation and the unveiling of the Canada's 150th British Home Child 2017 Memorial Quilt. We are honoured to be invited to have our exhibit in Newmarket's most treasured and historical cultural landmark. The exhibit will be open everyday from noon to 8pm.







45 Esandra Drive  
Toronto, Ontario



*British Home Child Group International*





Join Us May 16th  
Doors Open 6:30pm  
Screening at 7:00pm  
Panel Discussion After  
Tickets \$10.00





## *British Home Child Group International*

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